

# What Is the Great Commission?

Crucial Questions

**R. C. SPROUL**

What Is the Great Commission?

Crucial Questions booklets provide a quick introduction to definitive Christian truths. This expanding collection includes titles such as:

Who Is Jesus?

Can I Trust the Bible?

Does Prayer Change Things?

Can I Know God's Will?

How Should I Live in This World?

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?

What Is Faith?

What Can I Do with My Guilt?

What Is the Trinity?

TO BROWSE THE REST OF THE SERIES,  
PLEASE VISIT: [LIGONIER.ORG/CQ](http://LIGONIER.ORG/CQ)

CQ

# What Is the Great Commission?

R. C. SPROUL



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

*What Is the Great Commission?*

© 2015 by R.C. Sproul

Published by Ligonier Ministries  
421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771  
Ligonier.org

Printed in China

RR Donnelley

0001121

First edition, eighth printing

ISBN 978-1-64289-056-3 (Paperback)

ISBN 978-1-64289-084-6 (ePub)

ISBN 978-1-64289-112-6 (Kindle)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Ligonier Ministries. The only exception is brief quotations in published reviews.

Cover design: Ligonier Creative

Interior typeset: Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the Reformation Trust edition as follows:

Sproul, R.C. (Robert Charles), 1939-2017

What is the great commission? / by R.C. Sproul.

pages cm. -- (Crucial questions series ; No. 21)

ISBN 978-1-56769-498-7

I. Great Commission (Bible) I. Title.

BV2074.S67 2015

269'.2--dc23

2015018382

## Contents

<b>One</b>	What Is the Gospel? . . . . .	1
<b>Two</b>	What Is Evangelism? . . . . .	9
<b>Three</b>	Mobilizing the Laity . . . . .	21
<b>Four</b>	Systematic Evangelism . . . . .	31
<b>Five</b>	The Biblical Basis for Missions . . . . .	37
<b>Six</b>	Seeking the Lost . . . . .	45



## Chapter One

# What Is the Gospel?

**T**he battle between the Persian army of Darius I and the troops of Greece that took place at Marathon in 490 BC was a watershed moment in the Greco-Persian Wars and in the history of Western society. Until that point, Darius had not been defeated in his quest to conquer Greece, and Persian dominance across the Mediterranean region had grown steadily for more than one hundred and fifty years. The defeat of the superior Persian forces by the Greek army at Marathon ushered in the two-hundred-year



influence of Classical Greek culture and the decline of the Medo-Persian Empire.

This was a hugely important battle—yet the people back home had no idea of the outcome in the battle’s immediate aftermath. They had to wait anxiously to get some word of what had happened. But today, in most cases, we don’t have to wait very long for updates on significant events. We live in a world where news travels very rapidly, with sophisticated technology to announce what is going on around the globe in a matter of moments. In the ancient world, though, it was not like that. A battle of strategic importance for the history of the nation may have been taking place two thousand miles away, and it would certainly have taken some time for reports to travel so far.

Armies in the ancient world used runners to carry word about the outcome of battles. The people at home would post lookouts to watch for some sign of a messenger. It’s said that the watchman could tell by the bearing of the runner whether he was coming with good news or bad.

One of the enduring legacies of the Battle of Marathon is as the inspiration of the marathon-length race. The legend is that a runner brought news of the Athenian victory to the city of Athens and dropped dead from exhaustion

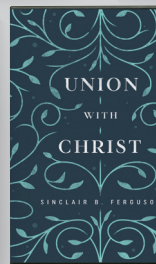
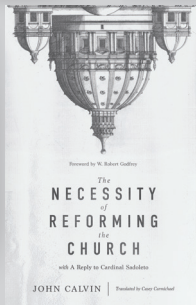
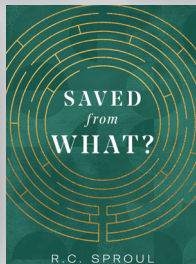
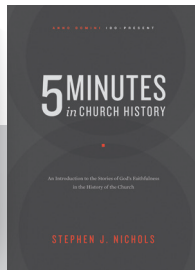
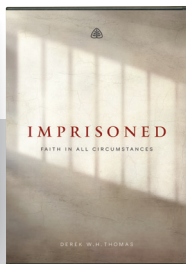
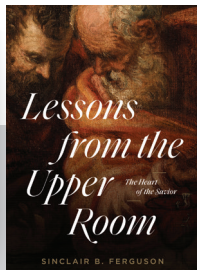
## What Is the Gospel?

after he arrived. He pushed himself to the absolute limit because he was bearing good news, and he wanted the people to be able to rejoice in it.

The Apostle Paul alluded to these practices in his epistle to the Romans, where he said, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (10:15). Picture how the watchman could see the feet flying as the runner rushed to the city gates to bring good news. It was a beautiful sight, and the people would shout celebrations of victory at the sight of him. They had a word for that kind of a message: it was a *euangelion*, a good message—a *gospel*.

The word *gospel* derives from the Old English *godspell*, meaning “good story” or “good message.” *Godspell* translates the Latin *evangelium*, which is derived from the Greek *euangelion*. The Greek word is made up of the prefix *eu-* and the root *angelion*. The prefix *eu-* is found frequently in the English language and refers to something “good.” Take the word *euphemism*, for example. A dentist about to drill might say, “This may cause a bit of discomfort,” rather than, “This is going to hurt.” He uses softer words to take the edge off something that is difficult for us to hear. That’s a euphemism: stating something in better terms than it actually is. Likewise, at a funeral, when a minister stands

We want to see men and women  
around the world connect the deep truths  
of the Christian faith to everyday life.



Order your copy of this title, download the digital version,  
or browse thousands of resources at **Ligonier.org**.



LIGONIER MINISTRIES